

REMARKS

The rejections have been considered at length. However, for the reason set forth beloved it is submitted that the claims would not have been rendered obvious by the combination of the cited references. Claims 1-19 are pending and have been examined on the merits. Claims 4, 8, 14-19 have been amended hereinabove. In the Office Action, the Examiner objected to the specification and to the abstract. The abstract has been replaced hereinabove to be within the range of 50 to 150 words. Further, the specification has also been amended hereinabove to include a cross-reference to related applications. No new matter has been added.

In the Office Action, the claims have been objected and rejected as follows:

1. Claims 4 and 8-19 have been objected to under 37 C.F.R. § 1.75(c) as being in improper form;
2. Claims 1-3 and 5-7 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being obvious over Bromberg et al. (U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 20030152623, hereinafter “Bromberg”) in view of Gupta et al. (Drug Discovery Today, 2002, hereinafter “Gupta”), Blum et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,294,591, hereinafter “Blum”) and Giammona et al. (Biochimica et Biophysica Acta, 1999, hereinafter “Giammona”).

Applicants respectfully traverse. As an initial matter, claims 4, 8 and 14-19 have been amended hereinabove to remove the multiple dependencies and to conform the claims to standard U.S. practice. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that amendment to the claims render the objection moot.

The presently claimed invention is directed to anionic hydrogel matrixes obtained by chemical reticulation by means of irradiation of copolymers containing photoreticulable groups,

in the presence of acid comonomers (*e.g.*, page 3, lines 1-4).

Bromberg does not disclose Applicants' invention. Bromberg provides for crosslinked networks of a polyelectrolyte wherein "dangling chains" of at least one amphiphilic co-polymer are bonded thereto through carbon-carbon bonding (*e.g.*, page 4, paragraph [0038]). A compound is amphiphilic when it contains both hydrophilic and hydrophobic groups. Thus, the microgel disclosed in Bromberg comprises two components: an amphiphilic copolymer (nonionic copolymer) capable of aggregation in response to a change in temperature, and an ionizable, covalently cross-linked polymeric network of monomers (*e.g.*, page 4, paragraph [0041]). As such, Bromberg does not disclose, teach or even suggest the presently claimed anionic hydrogel matrixes obtained by chemical reticulation by means of irradiation of copolymers containing photoreticulable groups, in the presence of acid comonomers.

Gupta does not make up for the missing links because it suffers from the same defects. Namely, Gupta discloses a general overview on hydrogels, but it is completely silent with regards to hydrogel matrixes obtained by chemical reticulation of copolymers containing photoreticulable groups in the presence of acid comonomers. Accordingly, the combination of Bromberg with Gupta still would not have rendered obvious the claimed subject matter.

Blum also does not add anything to the deficiencies of Bromberg and Gupta. Blum describes a process for preparing radiation crosslinkable polymers suitable for coatings, paints, adhesives etc (*e.g.*, col. 1, lines 6-11). Accordingly, one skilled in the art would not have any motivation to look at the teachings of Blum to prepare the presently claimed anionic hydrogel matrix. Further, Blum is completely silent with regard to the claimed anionic hydrogel matrixes. Thus, the combination of Bromberg, Gupta and Blum still does not disclose all of the claimed limitations.

Finally, Giammona discloses the synthesis and characterization of new biodegradable hydrogels (*e.g.*, Abstract at page 29). However, Giammona is completely silent with regard to acid comonomers. Accordingly, Giammona also does not add anything to the combination of the references discussed above.

Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that the cited references, alone or in combination are not the presently claimed invention and would not have rendered obvious the claimed subject matter to one skilled in the art. Thus, withdrawal of the rejections of claims 1-3 and 5-7 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) for allegedly being obvious is respectfully requested.

This response is being filed within shortened statutory period for response. Thus, no further fees are believed to be required. If, on the other hand, it is determined that any further fees are due or any overpayment has been made, the Assistant Commissioner is hereby authorized to debit or credit such sum to Deposit Account No. 02-2275.

Pursuant to 37 C.F.R. 1.136(a)(3), please treat this and any concurrent or future reply in this application that requires a petition for an extension of time for its timely submission as incorporating a petition for extension of time for the appropriate length of time. The fee associated therewith is to be charged to Deposit Account No. 02-2275.

An early and favorable action on the merits is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,
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